

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 0106

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, CU, AO, CA

SUBJ: CUBAN LEASE OF AIR CANADA DC-8S

REF: OTTAWA 0075

1. SUMMARY: CONTRACT UNDER WHICH CUBA WOULD LEASE TWO AIR CANADA DC-8S INCLUDES CONAKRY AND FREETOWN AS SERVICE POINTS. CONTRACT ALSO SPECIFIES THAT AIRCRAFT TO BE USED ONLY FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES BUT GOC HAS DECIDED TO REQUEST ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC UNDERTAKING AT POLITICAL LEVEL TO RULE OUT MILITARY USE. END SUMMARY.

2. AIR CANADA LEASE OF DC-8 AIRCRAFT TO CUBANA DISCUSSED BY TCO JANUARY 9 WITH PAUL LABERGE (DIRECTOR, EXTAFF TRANSPORT COMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY DIVISION) AND ARCH MCARTHUR OF HIS STAFF. BOTH EMPHASIZED THAT GOC WAS VERY MUCH AWARE POSSIBILITY AIRCRAFT BEING PUT TO UNDESIRABLE USES AND CONSEQUENT NECESSITY FOR SAFEGUARDS. THEY ADVISED ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS (WITH STRONG EMPHASIS OF SENSITIVITY OF THE INFORMATION) THAT GOC WAS ABOUT TO REQUEST A SPECIFIC UNDERTAKING FROM THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT SEPARATE FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LEASE TERMS THAT THE AIRCRAFT SO LEASED WOULD BE

USED FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES ONLY. REQUEST WOULD BE MADE MOMENTARILY (CERTAINLY WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS), PRESUMABLY IN OTTAWA, AND LABERGE IMPLIED THAT IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF ARRANGING APPOINTMENT BETWEEN APPROPRIATE GOC AND CUBAN OFFICIALS. DECISION TO REQUEST CUBAN UNDERTAKING WAS FIRM.

2. TCO QUESTIONED EXSTAFF OFFICIALS ABOUT TERMS OF LEASE, BUT FOUND THEM NOT COMPLETELY FAMILIAR WITH ALL ITS DETAILS. HOWEVER, THEY ADVISED: (1) LEASE IS FOR TWO YEARS; (2) MAINTENANCE OF THE AIRCRAFT IS TO BE DONE IN CANADA; (3) LEASE HAS FOLLOWING CONDITIONS: (A) AIRCRAFT ARE TO BE USED FOR CIVILIAN PASSENGER AND CARGO PURPOSES ONLY; (B) CUBANA IS TO REPORT DAILY ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS DAY, INCLUDING DESTINATIONS AND NUMBERS OF HOURS FLOWN; AND (C) THE PLACES TO BE SERVED ARE SPECIFIED. IN ADDITION TO POINTS NAMED IN THE BILATERAL (MONTREAL AND OTTAWA) THE LEASE AUTHORIZES A NUMBER OF OTHERS IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA (WHICH EXSTAFF OFFICERS WOULD NOT SPECIFY) PLUS CONAKRY AND FREETOWN IN AFRICA.

3. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THERE WERE ANY MECHANISMS IN THE CONTRACT WHEREBY AIR CANADA WOULD ASSURE ITSELF THAT THE DAILY REPORTING WAS CORRECT AND ACCURATE, LABERGE STATED THAT INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED BY CUBANA, RELATED AS IT WAS TO MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES, SHOULD BE AN ADEQUATE CONTROL. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE CONTRACT WAS CONSIDERED BY THE GOC AS A SECONDARY MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING ITS INTENT WITH RESPECT TO UTILIZATION OF THE AIRCRAFT FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES ONLY. PRIMARY RELIANCE WAS BEING PUT ON THE POLITICAL UNDERTAKING TO BE REQUESTED OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF CANADIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS.

4. TCO WAS ADVISED BY EUR/CAN SHORTLY BEFORE MEETING WITH LABERGE THAT USG APPROVAL OF THE LEASE ARRANGEMENT BY AIR CANADA AND CUBANA RELATED TO ONE AIRCRAFT ONLY. LABERGE AND MCARTHUR WERE SURPRISED BY THIS

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SUGGESTION AND MAINTAINED APPROVAL WAS FOR MORE THAN ONE. AFTER CONSIDERABLE PRODDING THEY CONFIRMED REFTEL INFORMATION THAT TWO AIRCRAFT WERE INVOLVED AT PRESENT, BUT WERE UNABLE TO INDICATE DELIVERY SCHEDULES AND DC-8 MODEL NUMBERS.

4. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT SHOULD ESPECIALLY NOTE HOW SENSITIVE THE GOC CONSIDERS THE INFORMATION REGARDING

ITS INTENT TO REQUEST FURTHER ASSURANCES FROM THE
CUBAN GOVERNMENT AND MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MAKE SURE
THIS DOES NOT GET TO THE PRESS. JOHNSON

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